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AUTHOR Damico, Sandra B.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to compare the scores of disruptive and nondisruptive middle school students (grades five through eight) on professed and inferred academic self concept. The Florida Key and the school-academic subscore of the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory were used to obtain scores on a population of 3,254 students enrolled in four middle schools in North Florida. From this group, 208 students were identified from school records as disruptive on the basis of having been removed from the learning environment two or more times during the first six months of the 1973-74 school year. A four-way analysis of variance revealed significant differences between inferred and professed self concept as learner scores of disruptive and nondisruptive students. No significant interactions were found between or among race, sex and school on the Florida Key. A significant four-way interaction was found on the Self Esteem Inventory. Those students identified by their behavior as disruptive had significantly lower inferred and professed academic self concepts than did students identified as nondisruptive. The theoretical implication drawn from the study was that negative feelings about oneself as a learner may be a contributing factor in student disruption. (Author)

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A Comparison Between the Self Concepts As Learner of Disruptive and Nondisruptive Middle School Students

Sandra B. Damico and William W. Purkey
College of Education, University of Florida

Charles V. Branch
Teachers College, Ball State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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A Comparison Between the Self Concepts As Learner of Disruptive and Nondisruptive Middle School Students

The increasing problem of student disruption in public schools resulted in the commissioning of a special Governor's Task Force in Florida. A major conclusion of the Task Force was that "although disruption by students is not a new occurrence in American schools, it has become a more frequent occurrence as well as involving greater numbers of students." (The Governor's Task Force on Disruptive Youth. 1973, 1.)

In an attempt to identify potentially disruptive students, research efforts have isolated dozens of variables which have been used to describe disruptive students, including socioeconomic status, academic achievement, IQ, Race, sex, age, number of siblings, and whether or not parents are divorced (Feldhusen, 1971; Governor's Task Force, 1973; Hagstrom & Gardner, 1969). Most of the variables found to be related to disruption are either unchangeable (race, sex, age) or beyond the scope of schools (socioeconomic status, home environment, level of parents' education, marital status). Thus, the descriptions have provided little assistance to educators in reducing student disruption.

One variable that could be related to student disruption and that may have implications for prescriptive teaching is student self concept as learner. In a series of studies, Purkey and associates have indicated the relationship between academic self concept and school behavior and have drawn implications for the classroom teacher (Purkey, 1970; Purkey & Avila, 1971; Purkey, Cage & Graves, 1973; Purkey, 1974). Related research in the area of juvenile delinquency has indicated a relationship between negative self concept and delinquency (Fitts & Hamner, 1969; Reckless & Dinitz, 1967). However, almost no data are available which permit an analysis of the relation between student self concept as learner and school disruption. The purpose of the present study was to test whether middle school students identified as disruptive differed significantly from nondisruptive students on measures of inferred and professed self concept as learner.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were drawn from a population of 3,254 students in grades five through eight at four middle schools in a county school system in

North Florida. The 208 students identified as disruptive were designated as such on the basis of having been removed from the learning environment two or more times during the first six months of the 1973-74 school year by a teacher in charge of the learning environment. These students were identified from school records.

The 208 disruptive students, selected from 45 homerooms, were included in the study if complete data on both instruments were available. A comparison group of 208 nondisruptive students were randomly selected from the same 45 homerooms.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to obtain the self concept as learner data for this study: The Florida Key (Purkey, Cage & Graves, 1973) and the school - academic subscore of the Self Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967).

The Florida Key is an instrument designed to assist the teacher to infer student self concept as learner. It relies on the teacher's ratings of a student in regard to 18 overt classroom behaviors. A split-halves estimate of reliability of total score for the Florida Key has been reported to be .93 (Purkey, Cage & Graves, 1973).

The Self Esteem Inventory (SEI) is a self report instrument which consists of 58 items, yielding a total score and five subscores. Only the eight items of the school - academic subscore were used in the present study.

Procedure

During the second and third months of the 1973-74 school year 45 homeroom teachers in four middle schools completed the Florida Key for each student in their homerooms. During the same period, all students in the 45 homerooms completed the 58 items of SEI. Thus, measures of student self concept as learner were obtained with both the Florida Key (based on teacher observations) and the SEI (based on student self report). All data were collected prior to the identification of students labeled disruptive. The inferred and professed academic self concepts of disruptive students were compared with those of an equal number of nondisruptive students randomly selected from the 45 homerooms.

To determine whether significant differences existed between disruptive and nondisruptive students on both inferred and professed measures of academic self concept, multivariate and univariate analyses of variance were conducted. A four-way factorial design was used to test main effects

of disruptive/nondisruptive, race, sex, school and interactions. While race, sex and school were not concerns of the current study, their consideration in the analysis of data provided a more rigorous test of the differences, if any, between groups. The five percent level was used to determine significance.

Results

The analysis revealed significant differences between the scores of disruptive and nondisruptive students on the Florida Key, with disruptive students scoring significantly lower. (A multivariate approximate F value of 85.06 had a probability of less than .001.) No significant interactions were found between or among race, sex or school. A summary of the multivariate analysis of variance is shown in Table 1. (See Table 1)

Analysis of variance of the school - academic subscale of the SEI revealed a significant difference between disruptive and nondisruptive students, with the scores of disruptive students being significantly lower. (The obtained F value of 18.32 had a probability of less than .001.) A four-way interaction among race, sex, school and disruptive/nondisruptive school variables was found (Table 2). (See Table 2)

To explore the possibility of a relationship between student self concept as learner and number of student disruptions, the scores of disruptive students on the Florida Key and SEI were compared to the number of student disruptions. Significant negative correlation coefficients would have indicated a relationship between the number of disruptions and academic self concept. No significant linear or curvilinear relationships were found between the number of student disruptions and scores on either the Florida Key or the SEI.

Discussion

The theoretical assumption underlying the present study was that a student's self concept as a learner was significantly related to his or her behavior in the classroom. If the assumption is correct, then students who are identified as disruptive should evidence lower self concepts as learner than those students identified as nondisruptive. The results of the present study strongly support this assumption. Regardless of whether academic self concept is determined by teacher observation or by student self report, the results support the conclusion that students identified by school records as disruptive have significantly lower academic self concepts than do a comparison group of students identified as nondisruptive.

Although it is recognized that correlational data do not demonstrate cause, the theoretical implication drawn from the present study is that negative feelings about oneself as a learner may be a significant factor in student disruption. By inviting students to feel better about themselves as learners, possibly through prescriptive teaching teachers may be able to significantly reduce the seriousness of student disruption in schools.

Table 1

Multivariate Analysis of Variance - Florida Key

Source	F
Disruptive/Nondisruptive	85.062*
School	2.978
Sex	2.205
Race	12.377*
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School	1.421
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X Sex	2.010
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X Race	.870
School X Sex	1.065
School X Race	.805
Sex X Race	1.751
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School X Sex	1.369
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School X Race	1.068
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X Sex X Race	.962
School X Sex X Race	1.799
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School X Sex X Race	1.628

* $p < .05$

Table 2

Analysis of Variance Summary SEI - School - Academic Subscale

Source	F
Within Cells	
Disruptive/Nondisruptive	18.315*
School	.845
Sex	.219
Race	.308
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School	.113
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X Sex	.129
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X Race	.236
School X Sex	.176
School X Race	1.286
Sex X Race	.215
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School X Sex	.471
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School X Race	.561
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X Sex X Race	.317
School X Sex X Race	.014
Disruptive/Nondisruptive X School X Sex X Race	3.274*

* $p < .05$

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